Names/Faces

Jones Cult Funds Removed, Zurich Bank Reports to U.S.

New York Times News Service

A government official said yesterday that a bank in Zurich had informed the Justice Department that the Peoples Temple assets, sometimes estimated to total as much as $8 million, had been removed. The name of the bank could not be learned.

However, there were conflicting reports from different government agencies about the disposal of the assets. Following queries to the United States Embassy in Bern, the Swiss capital, an embassy spokesman said late yesterday: "We have taken appropriate steps to protect United States interests."

But, another official, in Washington, said yesterday evening: "The Swiss checked the accounts and they had been emptied."

A Justice Department spokesman said that attorney Mark Lane and Terri Buford, formerly a business manager for the Jonestown Peoples Temple commune, reportedly had gone to Switzerland to remove the secret Zurich assets.

The spokesman, Robert Havel, said that early yesterday U.S. authorities here were informed that "Lane and Buford were reportedly heading for Switzerland." He added, "I don't know that for a fact."

Attempts to find Lane and Buford last night were unsuccessful. Lane was seen in France Wednesday, where he appeared on a television program, but Buford was not at his side.

According to one report reaching Washington officials yesterday, both Lane and Buford were seen in Switzerland earlier this week, but this could not be confirmed.